Luck, Elmer L

March 1917

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Luck, Elmer J

III3I - 85th Ave.,

Edmonton South, Alta., March I7, I9I7.

President R. A. Falconer, D.Litt., LL.D.,

University of Toronto .

Dear Sir :

I enclose herewith a copy of the letter I have just sent the Board of Graduate Studies, and am taking the liberty of bringing to your attention my appeal, first made in May, I9I5, for adequate recognition of my work done at the University of Leipzig. I feel that the Board's decision has been unnecessarily severe, considering the very special circumstances, and that I had a right to expect more sympathetic treatment from my Alma Mater ; I am therefore requesting them to reconsider my case, and in my letter have set forth in detail the grounds on which I base my claim for their official recognition.

You can, I am sure, understand how keen is the disappointment I feel, to realize that after fully earning my Ph.D. degree in Leipzig and after spending my last cent to take the course, I lost all, through no fault of mine, when within only a few weeks of the final formalities. To be frank, my 2¾ years' stay in Germany cost me $I2000.00 altogether ; $7000.00 of this represents my actual expenses, including, of course, living for myself and family,-- the remaining $5000.00 was what I spent in a desperate but unavailing attempt to save my wife's life. For fear you should wonder where a school teacher could ever find so much money, I may explain that it was partly my savings for six years of teaching, but mainly the proceeds of a fortunate real-estate investment during the " boom " of I9II-I2.

The keenest part of my disappointment is the realization that, although I fully earned the degree by my work at Leipzig, and although I spent far more on my course than the great majority of post-graduates ever do, I am now no longer in a position, either financially or physically, to comply with the conditions imposed on me by the Board. After all I have endured at the hands of the Germans,-- confiscation of property, expulsion from the University, imprisonment with common criminals, and humiliation of the bitterest sort,-- it seems hard to be further penalized by my own Alma Mater.

It is unfortunate that there are so few members of the Board who know me personally,-- for mine is peculiarly a case where sentiment must of necessity play some part with those who are to sit in judgment on the question. Professors Horning, Edgar, Bell, and Faull are the only ones with whom I am acquainted ; and of these, Prof. Horning is the only one who knows me intimately.

As far as I know, there have been only two objections raised against granting me the degree solely on the strength of my record at Leipzig and my thesis :

(I) " To waive the examination would make the degree practically honorary ; and the Ph.D. degree is granted only in course and never ' honoris causâ ' " ----- I contend, however, that as I have taken the entire course required by Leipzig, I have fully earned the degree already, and it is therefore simply a case of asking Toronto to give official

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recognition to the work done in Germany.

(2) " Such an irregular proceeding would establish an undesirable precedent " ---- But surely the circumstances are so very extraordinary that it is impossible to imagine a similar case ever again arising.

It is most unfortunate that I have no tangible evidence of the fact that I had completed the course of study and was fully prepared for my final examination ; but, as I have explained in my letter to the Board, it was absolutely impossible for me to get such a statement from my professors, because of the intensely bitter hatred for Britishers, which developed at the very beginning of hostilities. But surely my own affidavit should be convincing proof, when backed by a recommendation from those members of the Board who know me personally, especially from Prof. Horning, with whom I kept in close touch throughout my stay in Germany, as well as since my return, and who knows better than any one else what I have been doing and where I stand in the work.

More than that I cannot do, to establish the justice of my claim. I assure you that I shall be most deeply grateful for any help you may be willing to give me in the matter.

Yours most respectfully ,

Elmer L. Luck

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(Copy)

III31 - 85th Ave.,

Edmonton South, Alta., March 15, 1917.

To the Board of Graduate Studies,

University of Toronto .

Gentlemen :

May I respectfully ask the Board for a reconsideration of my case, on the following grounds :

(1) I have fully earned the Ph.D. degree, by my work at the University of Leipzig, but have been prevented by war from getting it. I believe, therefore, that I have a just claim on my Alma Mater for the official recognition of my work, which is now no longer possible for me to get from the University where I did that work.

(2) The Board has already expressed its willingness to grant me the degree, on two conditions,-- that I take an oral examination on the work on which I was to have been examined in L eipzig, and that I translate my entire thesis into English. These conditions are absolutely impossible for me, for reasons which I shall explain later ; and unless the Board is willing to reconsider the question, I have lost the fruits of all my years of work in Leipzig,-- lost, in the sense that even though I have had the training, and have taken the full course required there for the degree, I have no higher status now than I had before I went to Germany, and am therefore barred from taking positions which I am otherwise fully qualified to hold.

Let me review briefly the outstanding facts of my case :

I am thirty-four years of age, Canadian born, and of Canadian descent for four generations. I hold from Toronto University the degrees B.A. (1906) and M.A. (1910), and am at present Modern Languages Master in the Victoria High School, Edmonton.

Immediately after graduation in 1906, I came West to make Edmonton my permanent home. For two years I was in charge of the department of Modern Languages in Alberta College, and for the following four years was Moderns Master in the Strathcona Collegiate Institute. In June, 1912, I applied to the School Board here for leave of absence to study for my Ph.D. degree in Germany, and, taking my wife and two children with me, went to Leipzig. Here I spent over two years in preparation for the degree.

A few months before the outbreak of war, my wife died in Leipzig, leaving me alone with the care of our children. I was so near the end of my course that I decided to remain and complete it, even though under difficulties.

At the time war was declared in August, 1914, I was within only a few weeks of receiving my degree. My thesis had been accepted as thoroughly satisfactory, by my professors, and the date had been set for my oral examination, for which I was <u>fully prepared</u> at the time. Soon after this, I, along with all the other British students, was expelled

from the University, and was imprisoned in the Leipzig jail,-- solitary confinement under the harshest restrictions, and solely for the "crime" of being a British subject, and, as such, potentially dangerous. I shall not take time, however, to mention any further details of the bitter humiliation and brutal treatment to which my little girls and myself were subjected during the nine months which followed.

My release came unexpectedly, and at a time when I had given up all hope of ever getting my freedom. I returned to this country in May, 1915, the first Canadian to be exchanged by the British Foreign Office. I volunteered for service overseas, but was rejected by the medical examiner as being physically unfit, on account of heart trouble. I have, however, been doing my utmost since then to help the cause by giving my services free in the work of lecturing and recruiting ; to date I have raised over $6000.00 for Patriotic and Red Cross funds as the direct proceeds of my lectures, apart altogether from subscriptions solicited.

Immediately on my return I applied to Toronto University to have my case considered ; and after correspondence extending over nearly a year, I was informed that the Ph.D.degree would be granted on the conditions which I have already mentioned.

It is impossible for me to fulfil these conditions, for the following reasons :

(1) When I left Germany, all my books, notes, etc., were confiscated at Bentheim on the frontier. It was only by the merest chance that my thesis and rotographs were left to me,-- I had not packed them with the rest of my books, but for greater security had put them in my trunk, in the midst of my clothing ; and they were evidently overlooked. I have therefore none of my German text-books from which I had prepared myself for the oral examination in Leipzig, and, as such books are now unobtainable in this country, I should be obliged to get new and unfamiliar texts ; so that, to a certain extent, it would be like preparing for an entirely new examination. And even more serious still is the loss of my note-books containing all the notes I had taken at lectures, and had made in the Library for over two years. These were invaluable to me in preparing for my examination, and can never be replaced.

(2) To translate my entire thesis into English is a task which would in itself require about three months of undivided attention. I estimate that to fulfil the Board's requirements, I should have to ask my present employers, the Edmonton School Board, for a year's leave of absence, so that I could devote my whole time and attention to the work of translating the thesis, and of preparing again for the oral which I was fully prepared to take in August, 1914. And even then I should still be under the handicap of having lost all my notes. After fully earning my degree by covering the required course of study at Leipzig, and having my thesis accepted by my professors,-- after being expelled from the University and prevented through no fault of mine from completing the final formalities,-- after losing by confiscation practically all my personal property, including books and notes,-- after suffering humiliation, abuse, and imprisonment,-- it seems most unjust that I should be penalized still further before being granted the degree which, in common justice, is mine.

(3) For financial reasons a further loss of time is out of the

question for me. My stay in Germany cost me far more than I had expected, and when I returned to Canada I was penniless. Situated as I am now, with a family to support, and nothing to fall back on, I cannot afford a year or even part of a year, for study alone, and have no alternative but to continue in the work of teaching.
(4) Because of ill health it is impossible for me to do the necessary studying after hours, outside of my regular work. My physical condition is now, and has been for some time, most serious (heart and nerves) . I am constantly under the doctor's care, and have been absolutely forbidden by him to attempt any extra work beyond my school duties ; in fact, in my present condition, it is with the greatest difficulty that I am able to keep up even the work of teaching.

For one further reason I feel that I deserve consideration,-- although I admit that this carries no weight in itself, unless my other reasons are valid. All Canadian Universities have been granting special consideration to those students who have gone to the front : I too volunteered for overseas service, but was rejected by the medical examiner as physically unfit ; and since that time I have been devoting all my spare time and strength to the work of lecturing to aid recruiting officers in various parts of this province, and to raise money for Patriotic and Red Cross funds .

The question naturally arises as to what proof I have for all the statements I have made. I can submit the following documents :
(I) Letter received from Prokanzellar Brandenburg of Leipzig University, just before I went to Germany, in which I was given permission to take my degree in <u>three</u> semesters (because of my M.A. degree) instead of the usual six.
(2) My " Testat-Buch " (which I have already submitted, along with my thesis) showing the lectures and seminars I attended for <u>four</u> semesters. This, to prove that I spent even longer time in actual attendance at the University of Leipzig than was required of me.
(3) An official certificate from the military authorities here, showing that I volunteered for overseas service, but was rejected as physically unfit.
(4) A certificate from my doctor as to the seriousness of my physical condition, and the consequent impossibility of my doing any extra studying.
(5) For my statement that my thesis had been accepted, and the date set for my oral, I can submit only my own affidavit, as it was quite impossible to get any written statement from my professors. Although I had been on intimate terms of friendship with them, they turned bitterly against me immediately after war was declared, for being, as they said, a representative of " that cursed hypocritical race, which, while professing friendship, had been secretly plotting Germany's ruin " ! Only a few weeks before, Prof. Max Förster, under whose direction I had done my thesis, had told me, in accepting it, that it was well done, and that I could expect a high " Zensur " ; now, however, he not only refused my request for a written statement regarding my work, but would not even permit me to say a word in defence of myself or my country. After speaking most insultingly to me he dismissed me curtly, saying that he would consider it a dishonor to his country and to the uniform he wore, to do me a favor of any

kind. He did not wish ever again to see me or any others of my race, and only hoped his Government would lose no time in taking summary measures of reprisal for the " shameful way innocent Germans were being tortured in England. "

I may add that, of all the members of the Board of Graduate Studies, Prof. L. E. Horning is the only one who knows me intimately. If further information should be desired regarding me, I am sure President Tory, of the University of Alberta, would be pleased to submit a statement. He has known me since 1908, and since my return from Germany has taken a very special interest in my work along patriotic lines.

I trust most sincerely that the Board, realizing how much this means to me, will pardon me for taking the liberty of urging that my case be reconsidered.

Yours very respectfully ,

Elmer L. Luck

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March 28th, 1917

E. L. Luck, Esq.,

11131 - 85th Avenue,

Edmonton South.

Dear Mr. Luck:

At a meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies held on Friday after your letter to the Board was read I also read the letter which you sent me and your case was very fully considered.

After full consideration of the reports from the various Faculties, however, it was decided with practically no dissentient voice that the Board could not see its way to recommend the Senate to remove the conditions that it had made in the beginning with regard to your examinations for the degree. They made concessions which were quite unusual already, and they were unwilling to go any further. It is not that they do not have deep sympathy with you, but they recognise that the conditions of the degree must be adhered to pretty closely.

You seem to write as though you had a claim on the degree and you speak of being further penalised by your own Alma Mater. I am sure that the Board does not look upon it in that way. They are really asking that conditions that were not carried out in Leipzig should be carried out here, and I am sure that for your own satisfaction in the future it would be an advantage for you to be able to say that you have earned your degree and that it had not been given to you as a matter of compassion. Regretting the conditions in which you find yourself, I am,

Yours sincerely,